

**CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND  
PRESENTATION, INTERVIEWS, SPECIAL SESSION AND WORKSESSION  
OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
(Adopted September 26, 2005)**

**Monday, July 18, 2005**

**OFFICIALS PRESENT:**

Mayor Porter	City Manager Matthews
Councilmember Austin-Lane	Community and Government Liaison Ludlow
Councilmember Elrich	City Clerk Carpenter
Councilmember Mizeur	Library Director Arnold-Robbins
Councilmember Seamens	Recreation Director Haiduven
Councilmember Williams	HCD Director Daines
	Construction Manager George
	City Attorney Silber

**ABSENT:**

Councilmember Barry

The meeting was called to order at 7:44 p.m. in the Municipal Building Council Chambers, 7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park, Maryland.

Mayor Porter announced that Council had held an Executive Function Session earlier in the evening to conduct the City Manager's evaluation.

**COUNCIL COMMENTS**

Mr. Seamens wished a happy 75<sup>th</sup> birthday to Kenny Jones.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented on the Metro green space issue. She noted that the City received a copy of what Metro transmitted to FTA on Friday. She said we need to pay particularly urgent attention to the matter.

Ms. Austin-Lane noted Gene Counihan, of the Metro Government Affairs Office, had made sure that Metro followed through on its agreement to transmit the information to the City. She requested Council concurrence to send flowers and a note of appreciation to Mr. Coonihan, who is in the hospital. [Council concurred.]

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Seth Grimes, Willow Avenue, commented on his concerns about crime in his neighborhood. He asked what is the exact current number of sworn officers available for duty and what is being done to maintain public safety in light of police staffing difficulties. Mr. Grimes also asked what is being done to boost recruitment and retention of sworn officers.

Ms. Porter responded that Council has given the Chief the authority to recruit continuously.

Mr. Seamens said he would like to discuss the staffing problem and hear recommendations from the City Manager and Police Chief.

Ms. Matthews said she would arrange to have the Police Chief provide a briefing to Council.

## **PRESENTATION**

### **1. Update on the Community Center Construction Project**

Ms. Matthews noted that she would provide an update during the Community Center discussion later in the evening.

Mr. Williams announced that he had scheduled a meeting with staff to discuss possibilities as to how to deal with the stage in the Council Chambers as a follow-up to Council's discussion of where to hold future Council meetings.

## **INTERVIEWS**

### **2. Arts and Humanities Commission - John Borstel**

Council interviewed John Borstel.

### **3. Committee on the Environment - Margaret Robnett**

Council interviewed Margaret Robnett.

### **4. Candidates for Ward 2 Council Seat - Rob Liebreich, Marie Ritzo, Cynthia Terrell**

Rob Liebreich was interviewed by Council. He noted his strong management skills and experience in construction and shelter properties. Mr. Liebreich noted that he has worked with youth and senior citizens. He said that, as a new father, he wants to make sure we continue to live in a safe environment. Mr. Liebreich commented on his involvement in Ward 2. He said he is involved in public safety walks, serves as a COLTA commissioner, and is involved in neighborhood through other interactions with his neighbors, listening to their concerns. He noted that he has just completed an MBA, has lots of energy, has great ideas, and likes people.

Marie Ritzo was interviewed by Council. She said she has been in Takoma Park for 22 years. She noted she never had any intention of leaving the neighborhood, where she has been president of the neighborhood association, was active in One Takoma, and involved in almost every political campaign in the city. Ms. Ritzo commented that she is aware of issues in Ward 2. She said that people know her and are comfortable approaching her. Ms. Ritzo noted that she worked with Heather Mizeur on her last campaign and feels that she has a similar perspective on

the issues.

Cynthia Terrell was interviewed by Council. She commented that she loves the structure and process of government and is interested in getting new people involved. Ms. Terrell said she has a lot of energy. She noted she has experience in politics and with a broad range of issues. Ms. Terrell commented on her Ward 2 experience. She said she was involved with SOSCA at one time, and was active in resolving traffic issues at Jackson and Boyd. Ms. Terrell said she is interested in environmental issues, in how to sustain a level of involvement in the community, and using the opportunity to get people involved in a meaningful way.

## **5. Resolution Appointing a Ward 2 Councilmember to Fill the Unexpired Term of Heather Mizeur**

Ms. Porter noted that she had been appointed to the Council when Mayor DelGuidice was elected to the County Council and Ed Sharp was selected as Mayor. She said she feels that the most important criterion is to choose the person who can best represent the ward. The appointee will need to deal with some very important issues in a short amount of time. Ms. Porter said she believes that person is Marie Ritzo.

Mr. Seamens commented that it will be difficult for the individual because of the limited amount of time to serve. He noted the number of really qualified people who stepped forward to volunteer, saying it reinforces the idea for instant runoff elections. Mr. Seamens said that experience is the most important thing we have to look at, at this point. Marie Ritzo has been involved for a very great number of years. Juan Torres is also a very strong candidate for this position.

Mr. Williams also commented on the excellent qualifications of the applicants. He said he agrees that Marie Ritzo has the contacts and experience to represent Ward 2 for this short period of time. The community center is one of the bigger issues we will be dealing with. Her contacts in the community will help her.

Ms. Austin-Lane said she is encouraged that new faces are coming forward. She agreed that having experience in the community and in leadership positions will make it easier for the individual selected. She noted that in the last Ward 2 Council election, Juan Torres received 120 votes and Heather Mizeur received over 500, which shows Ward 2 voters' support for him. Ms. Austin-Lane said that since a majority of Councilmembers seem to have decided otherwise, she will acquiesce to their judgment, but wanted to point out these facts.

Ms. Mizeur commented that a lot of the folks that have come forward, in part because of the limited nature of the position. She thanked everyone for coming forward.

Motion by Williams; second by Porter.

Nellie Moxley, President of Pinecrest, asked why Ms. Mizeur could not continue in her seat.

Ms. Mizeur responded that she had to step down because it is required by the City Charter.

Colleen Clay, Co-President of SOSCA, commented that Ms. Ritzo is really well prepared and experienced. Ms. Clay said she believes that Ms. Ritzo will be able to work with Heather Mizeur very well.

Norm Gleichman, 7113 Central Avenue, spoke as Ms. Ritzo's husband, noting that his family is very proud of her. He said she is very tough, smart, dedicated and a great resident of the City of Takoma Park. She worked with the Friends of Carole Highlands Board, where she strove to improve the school where a lot of Takoma Park boys and girls went to school. She is an enthusiastic participant in Ward 2 activities.

Resolution 2005-58 was adopted (VOTING FOR: Austin-Lane, Porter, Williams, Seamens, Mizeur; ABSENT: Barry, Elrich).

**Resolution 2005-58  
(Attached)**

**6. Resolution Concerning the Sale and Development of Open Space Located at the Takoma Metro**

Motion by Austin/Lane; second by Williams.

Ms. Austin-Lane suggested a number of changes to the proposed resolution. She commented that the resolution will give the City the basis it needs to move forward.

Mr. Williams concurred with the changes.

Ms. Porter commented that we don't want this action to be construed as to be against the District of Columbia. A large number of the people who use the station are Maryland residents. Takoma Park has the right and obligation to get involved in this issue. She commented on the transit related issues addressed in the resolution.

Mr. Williams commented that we made our concerns clear all along about access to the transportation hub at the Metro station, the ability to expand the number of bus bays, and the ability to provide better access to Metro. He said it is hard to believe that Metro would not want the ability to expand bus bays or to provide better access to their service. Our addressing this as a transit hub is something we must do. He said he solicited input and has heard overwhelming concerns about the proposal.

Mr. Seamens commented that he tries to consider what is best for the community, with the bias toward Ward 4. He said he pays special attention to transit issues. The conceptual site plan and the contract put limits on future expansion of transit, and a limitation on expansion of bus transit to the Metro.

Ms. Mizeur said she agrees with her colleagues and supports the resolution.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that she is collaborating with DC residents on the tone we need to be setting. She said she is encouraged that we have continued to collaborate with DC residents. She said there was a meeting with Bob Smith, the Montgomery County representative to the Metro Board, this past week. She said we are reaching for an open process, to be able to weigh in before the decision is made and to have our feedback matter.

Mark Sherman, Eastern Avenue (DC resident), commented in favor of the resolution, noting that the land was taken for a public purpose but only the developers will gain from this plan.

Jeffrey Silverstone, said he agrees with the resolution. He commented that it should specifically mention the joint transportation plan.

Nellie Moxley, spoke in favor of the resolution. She commented on the confusion about jurisdictional boundaries.

Seth Grimes, Willow Avenue, spoke as a member of the Old Town Residents Association. He said the Association strongly supports the resolution and also supported adding a mention of the joint transportation plan.

Bill Anderson, Eastern and Holly Avenue, thanked Council for their leadership. He said that as a resident of the neighborhood, he is not opposed to development of the site, but the plan is out of character and scale with the neighborhood. He said he wants to assure that Takoma Park, Maryland has standing in the issue.

Sabrina Baron, President of Historic Takoma, expressed concern that Maryland stakeholders have not had an adequate voice in the process. She supported the resolution, noting that the site is in the DC historic district. She said what is done should be compatible with future transit needs and compatible with the historic community.

Francis Phipps, Holly Avenue, spoke about other development in DC in the area around the Metro site, saying that it is important that we manage growth. Ms. Phipps said we need a seat at the table, which we get through the WMATA representative by going to our elected officials. She said the proposed development is not in keeping with our character in Takoma Park.

Sara Green, 7106 Piney Branch Road, NW, thanked Council for “hanging in there” on this issue. She urged Council to continue to ask for a seat at the table.

Lorraine Pearsall, Vice President of Historic Takoma, commented that once the public is invited to participate, FTA may have already approved the sale. She said we need to get the attention of our federal representatives.

Faith Wheeler, ANC Commissioner, said she applauds the resolution. She commented on the

transportation study data that shows the number of failing intersections.

Cathy Carrol, 6<sup>th</sup> and Aspen in DC, said many in DC would support the content of the resolution. She commented that she would like to see the green space last for future generations.

Mr. Elrich commented that the community is being betrayed. In the original plan, WMATA's vision of development was a small piece that kept the park intact. We were not going to get a commuter site. It was going to be a transit hub. The Council needs to be willing to do what it takes.

Ms. Austin-Lane suggested a friendly amendment to reference the joint transportation study. Mr. Williams concurred.

The City Council discussed ways to obtain support for the City's position.

Mr. Seamens commented that in the near term Council should work with the City Manager to determine what additional resources we need to devote to this issue, to review the resources that we are dedicating to this, or see what things we can remove from the Council's priorities.

Nancy Abbot, Holly Avenue, urged Council to gather the historical documents on the issue and to take strong action.

Resolution 2005-59 was adopted (VOTING FOR: Porter, Autin-Lane, Elrich, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams).

**Resolution 2005-59**  
**(Attached)**

**7. First Reading Ordinance Amending the City Code, Chapter 8.12, Peddlers and Transient Merchants (Including Canvassers)**

Motion by Seamens; second by Elrich.

Ordinance 2005-22 was accepted at first reading (VOTING FOR: Porter, Elrich, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Austin-Lane, Barry).

**Ordinance 2005-22**  
**(Attached)**

**8. First Reading Ordinance Authorizing a PILOT Agreement with Edinburgh House**

Ms. Daines explained the purpose of the ordinance.

Motion by Seamens/second by Elrich.

Ordinance 2005-23 was accepted at first reading (VOTING FOR: Porter, Elrich, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Austin-Lane, Barry, Mizeur).

**Ordinance 2005-23**  
**(Attached)**

**9. First Reading Ordinance Authorizing the Purchase of Furniture and Equipment for the Community Center**

Ms. Haiduven explained that this process is running simultaneously with the request to the Takoma Foundation for funding. The ordinance will approve the purchase of equipment and computers for the Community Center, not the administrative area.

Ms. Matthews commented on the need to approve the purchase before Council's summer recess. The ordinance will not take effect until the grant funds are approved. This ordinance contemplates the remaining \$15,000 coming from the unappropriated reserve.

Motion by Seamens; second by Mizeur.

Ordinance 2005-24 was accepted at first reading (VOTING FOR: Porter, Elrich, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams; ABSENT: Austin-Lane, Barry).

**Ordinance 2005-24**  
**(Attached)**

**10A. Discussion of Bids for the Community Plaza Level of the Community Center**  
**10B. Discussion of the Community Center Liaison Committee's Recommendations**

Howard Kohn, Chair of the Citizens Committee for the Community Center, was present for the discussion. He reported that the Takoma Foundation's fundraising for the Community Center continues. 239 inscribed bricks have been sold to date.

Ms. Matthews briefly provided information on the bids received for the project, which included a number of bid alternates: door and CCTV security system, voice fire alarm system, window protection for the Public Safety Level, use of low VOC interior paint, and installation of a commercial kitchen. She then gave a financial update (attached).

**BREAK**

The Council recessed for a scheduled break at 9:56 p.m. and reconvened at 10:15 p.m. with the discussion of the status of the project currently under construction by James F. Knott Construction and the associated Proposed Change Orders.

Ms. Matthews explained the Heath Department requirements for a kitchen if it were to be

available for public use.

Mr. Seamens expressed concern about the ongoing operation of the kitchen if it were to be installed.

Ms. Haiduven provided some information about kitchen operations. She explained that she is still researching the question.

Ms. Porter requested the City Manager to obtain a cost estimate to “rough in” the plumbing for the kitchen so that it could be installed at a later time if more funding becomes available.

Ms. Ludlow described in detail the proposed security system for the project. She indicated that she has carefully reviewed the proposal to look for cost savings.

Council discussed the proposal at length, including the cost and the possibility of seeking additional bids from security firms, use of a keyed system, expectations for staff securing the rooms, and the need to provide security to Community Center staff and users.

Ms. Matthews recommended that Council approve a contract with TRG for the base bid with recommended alternates. She indicated that she hopes to have more information available before Council action in September.

Mr. Elrich and Mr. Kohn explained their proposal to have some preliminary work done to continue exploring the possibility of building a gym. They propose to have additional borings done to determine soil conditions and to have a contractor locate underground utilities.

Council was supportive of the idea but requested more information.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

The Council adjourned for the evening at 12:13 a.m.